

Nutrition

Nutrition and physical activity patterns are strongly linked to optimal health and well-being. Studies have shown that poor nutrition plays a key role in the onset of numerous diseases and medical conditions. Dietary practices are associated with the prevention of conditions including cardiovascular disease, cancer, and cerebrovascular disease.⁷ Furthermore, obesity is a major risk factor for diabetes, hypertension, and coronary artery disease.⁸ Consumption of saturated fats can raise cholesterol levels, block arteries and thus increase the risk for coronary artery disease.⁹

On the other hand, consuming a lowfat diet that is also high in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains is clearly associated with a variety of health benefits, including a reduction in the risk for a number of diseases.¹⁰ In addition, adequate consumption of specific nutrients will help prevent certain health conditions. For example, increased calcium intake reduces the risk for osteoporosis^{11,12} and increased consumption of folic acid lowers the risk for heart disease. By following the recommended guidelines for nutrition and fitness, Angelenos have the opportunity to reduce their risk of chronic disease and other conditions.

- California residents on average eat 3.8 servings of fruit and vegetables per day, lower than the Healthy People 2000 goal of 5.0 servings per day (see Table 3.3).
- According to California statistics, of those people eating at least one meal out on a daily basis, 48% of them ate at a fast food restaurant.¹³

Table 3.3: Nutrition

		L.A. County	California	HP 2000
Daily average number of servings of fruit and vegetables		★	3.8 ¹	5.0
Daily percent of people who ate at least one meal out		★	41.0% ¹	★
Daily percentage of people who ate at a fast food restaurant while eating at least one meal out		★	48.0% ¹	★
High school students who had eaten five or more servings of fruits and vegetables ²	Total	30.5%	32.5%	★
	Male	34.6%	35.4%	★
	Female	27.0%	30.1%	★
Overweight	Total	47.0% ³	★	20.0%
	Mild/moderate overweight ⁴	33.0%	★	★
	Severe overweight ⁵	14.0%	★	★
	Male	55.0% ³	★	20.0%
	Female	39.0% ³	★	20.0%

1. California Dietary Practices Survey: Focus on Fruits and Vegetables, 1989–1997, California Department of Health Services, Sacramento, CA, 1998.

2. Students who had eaten ≥5 servings during day preceding the survey, 1997 YRBS, MMWR, CDC.

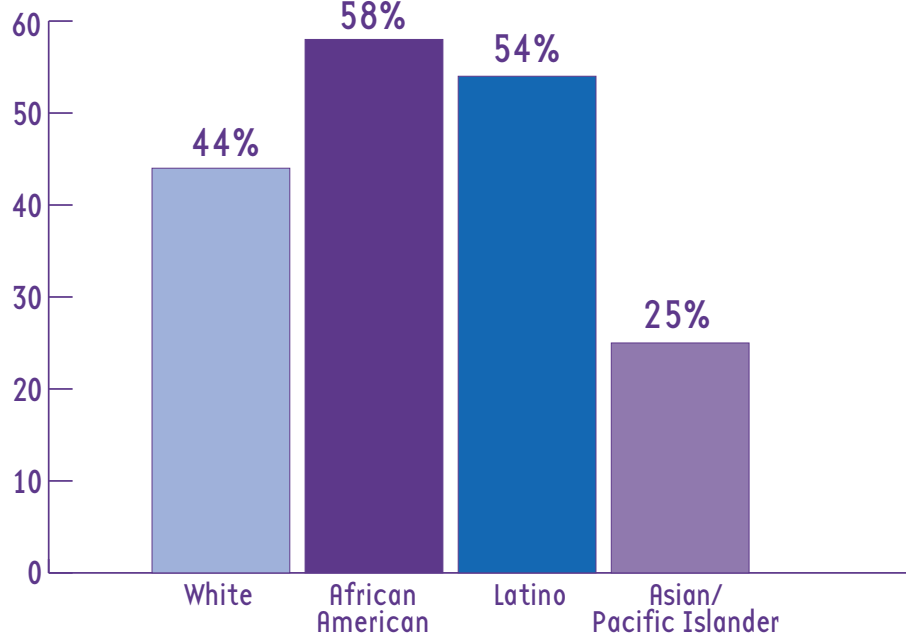
3. Overweight is defined as Body Mass Index (BMI) ≥25, adults, 20–74 years of age, 1997 Los Angeles County Health Survey (1997 LACHS).

4. Mild/moderate overweight is defined as Body Mass Index (BMI) ≥25 and >30, adults, 20–74 years of age, 1997 LACHS.

5. Severe overweight is defined as Body Mass Index (BMI) ≥30, adults, 20–74 years of age, 1997 LACHS.

★ Data not available

Figure 3.6: Percentage Of Adults Who Are Overweight, Los Angeles County, 1997



Note: Overweight is defined as Body Mass Index (BMI) ≥ 25 , adults, 20–74 years of age.

Source: 1997 LACHS, Los Angeles County Department of Health Services.

→ 1997 California Dietary Practices Survey found that 53% of Californians report drinking milk on any given day. Latinos reported the highest rate (61%) followed by whites (55%) and African-Americans (32%).¹⁴

→ 59% of Californians agree that the reason they are not eating more fruits and vegetables is because they are hard to get at work, and 57% report that they are hard to buy in restaurants.¹⁵

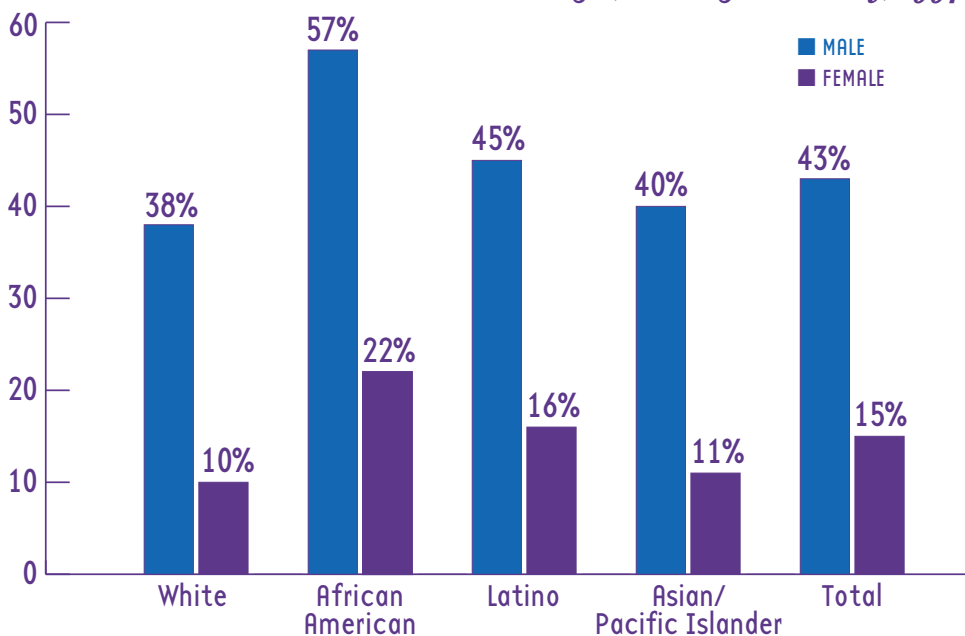
→ 85% of Californians report that they are not eating a low-fat diet because they are not in the habit of doing so.

Overweight

→ Overweight is a significant problem in Los Angeles County, affecting nearly one-half of the adult population (see Table 3.3). Further analyses show that the prevalence of overweight varies across racial and ethnic groups (see Figure 3.6).

Therefore, cultural and environmental factors should be considered when developing intervention programs to change dietary practices.

Figure 3.7: Percentage Of Adults Who Are Overweight But Do Not Consider Themselves Overweight, Los Angeles County, 1997



Note: Overweight is defined as Body Mass Index (BMI) ≥ 25 , adults, 20–74 years of age.

Source: 1997 LACHS, Los Angeles County Department of Health Services.

→ 43% of men and 15% of women who are overweight based on their body mass index (BMI) do not consider themselves to be overweight. These percentages vary by race/ethnicity (see Figure 3.7). This group of individuals is likely to benefit from weight loss but may not make the effort to lose weight because they do not recognize or acknowledge their overweight status.

Physical Activity

- 20% of men and 23% of women in California do not exercise outside of work (see Table 3.4). Physical inactivity is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease while moderate to high levels of physical activity are associated with a lower risk of premature mortality.^{17,18}
- 35% percent of students in Los Angeles walked or bicycled for at least 30 minutes on five or more of the seven days preceding the survey, i.e. moderate physical activity, compared to 26% in all of California (see Table 3.4).
- Latinos and African-Americans had the highest proportions of adults who do not exercise outside of work compared to other groups. Among Latinos, 42% of males and 39% of females do not exercise outside of work. In comparison, among African-Americans, 32% of females and 28% of males do not exercise outside of work (see Figure 3.8).

Table 3.4: Physical Activity

	L.A. City ²	L.A. County	California	HP 2000
Adults who do not exercise outside of work. ¹				
Total	*	*	21.4%	15.0%
Male	*	*	20.3%	*
African-American	*	*	27.7%	20.0%
Latino	*	*	41.5%	25.0%
Female	*	*	22.5%	*
African-American	*	*	31.9%	20.0%
Latino	*	*	39.0%	25.0%
High school students who participated in moderate physical activity ³				
Total	34.6%	*	26.0% ⁵	*
Male	36.3%	*	27.6% ⁵	*
Female	33.1%	*	24.6% ⁵	*
High school students who participated in vigorous physical activity ⁴				
Total	60.8%	*	65.2% ⁵	75.0%
Male	69.7%	*	73.8% ⁵	*
Female	53.0%	*	57.9% ⁵	*

1. California Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 1995

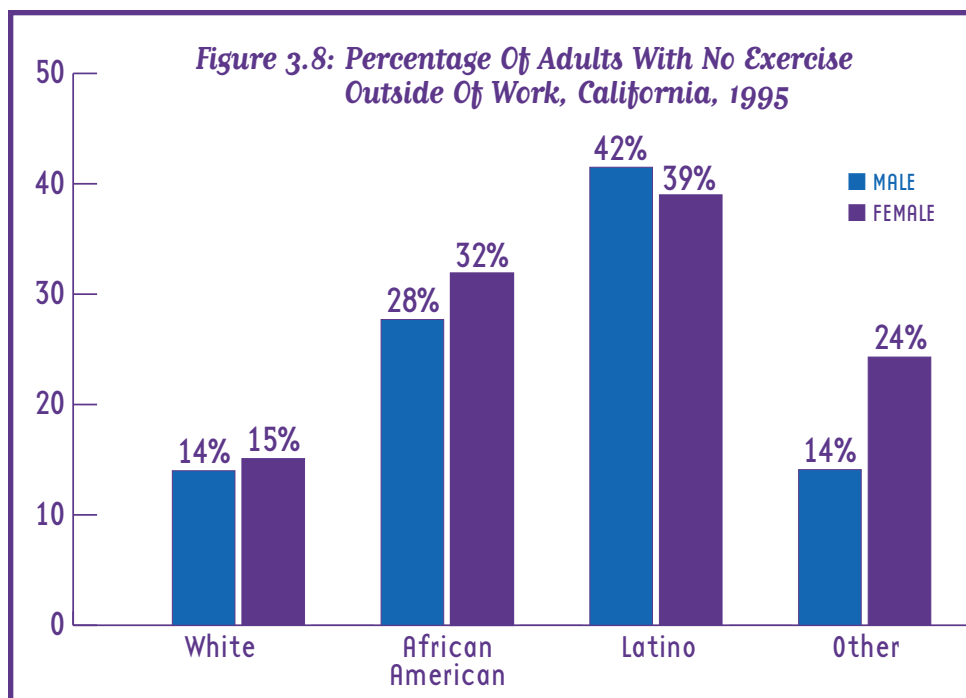
2. Kann L, Kinchen, SA, Williams BI, et.al. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance-United States, 1997. In: CDC Surveillance Summaries, Aug. 14, 1998. MMWR. 1998;47(no. SS-3). Note: Weighted data provided for Los Angeles includes only city-wide statistics.

3. Walked or bicycled for at least 30 minutes on ≥5 of the 7 days preceding the survey. Note: Not mutually exclusive from vigorous physical activity.

4. Activities that caused sweating and hard breathing for at least 20 minutes on ≥3 of the 7 days preceding the survey. Note: Not mutually exclusive from moderate physical activity.

5. Unweighted data for California does not include high school students from the LAUSD.

* Data not available.



Source: California Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 1995.

Nutrition, Overweight and Physical Activity—Data Sources

1. Los Angeles County Department of Health Services—Public Health
Nutrition Program
2. Los Angeles County Department of Health Services—Public Health
Office of Health Assessment and Epidemiology
1997 Los Angeles County Health Survey
3. California Department of Health Services
Cancer Prevention and Nutrition Program
Research Unit
4. California Department of Health Services
Cancer Surveillance Section
CATI Unit
California Behavioral Risk Factor Survey
5. United States Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Epidemiology Program Office
MMWR Series

See Appendix for complete references on these and other data resources.